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NEWS & VIEWS

Games CELAM Plays

The winter meeting of the new executive council of CELAM, the Latin American Bishops' Conference, confirms for the correspondent of *Informations Catholiques Internationales*, Parisian intellectual journal, that "water has been put in the wine of Medellin."

Medellin was the 1968 meeting of Latin American bishops, which outlined a progressive social role for the church and gave hope of a profound renewal of the church in Latin America.

The pessimism in *Informations* stems from the questioning of certain of the intentions for renewal; from the restructuring of CELAM's directorate to give more power to pre-conciliar spirits, such as Bishop Lopez Trujillo of Colombia, while excluding progressives like Bishop Marcos McGrath of Panama; and from a shutting-out of the press from all but the barest of communication.

Journalists had been warned by CELAM officials prior to the winter meeting "not to expect a journalistic event." Warned as they were, however, they did not anticipate, according to *Informations*, a replay of the journalistic games of the first session of Vatican II, when journalists had to depend on the confidences of a few participants for what information they got.

Finally, suggests *Informations*, the abrupt termination of the meeting a day ahead of schedule was engineered to slick journalists out of expected press-meetings with certain bishops. The move succeeded.

Britain, Too

The Manchester Guardian investigated 100 British companies with businesses in South Africa and discovered only three were paying all employees above the minimum for an African family to avoid malnutrition.

Further, some very prominent companies earning large profits there were found to be paying only one-third to one-half the minimum subsistence standard, with the result that malnutrition is widespread among workers' families and living conditions abominable.

Thus far there has been no official British government reaction to the disclosures, but 100 Labor MPs have signed a House of Commons motion "noting with disgust the low wages paid by the British firms."

The government is said to be "seriously concerned" about the problem, but the *Guardian* says its view seems to be that it can only persuade, not compel, British companies in South Africa to pay a living wage.

The sound is familiar.

Lippmann, 83, on Nixon

Walter Lippmann, who in 1971 was equating Nixon with Wilson (and putting Wilson down for his "messianism, globalism, moralism"), makes a 360-degree Nixon turn in a *Washington Post* interview with biographer Ronald Steel, conducted prior to being admitted to a New York hospital with heart trouble.

Lippmann now gives Nixon "high marks" on the very points on which he was prepared to discount him.

"His role in American history has been that of the man who had to liquidate, defuse, deflate the exaggerations of the romantic period of American imperialism and American inflation," commented Lippmann. "Inflation of promises, inflation of hopes, the Great Society, American supremacy—all that had to be deflated because it was all beyond our power and beyond the nature of things. [Nixon's] role has been to do that. I think on the whole he's done pretty well at it."

Many will agree with Lippmann's analysis of the problem (part of it, anyway), but question that Nixon policy represents solution—or change. "American imperialism" and "American inflation" of hopes and promises come in a number of styles. Nixon's is only the most recent.

As Richard Whalen, a conservative like Lippmann, says in a not unrelated context in the current *Harper's*: "If we take the Nixon performance at face value, we are being conned. . . ."

'Plus ca change . . .'

Items from a Lenten reading list being advertised in the Trenton *Monitor*, Boston *Pilot* and other diocesan newspapers:

• *The Evolution Hoax Exposed* (Why Colleges Breed Communists). Field. PB. Absolutely Devastates Evolution. $1.

• *The Inquisition*. Hayward, 176 pp. HB. Surprisingly candid treatment of the whole Inquisition period, showing why it was necessary and exonerating the Church. Excellent on the suppression of the Templars. $4.

• *Look! The Madonna Is Weeping*. Jongen. 158 pp. HB. 30 illus. Best Account of the Weeping Madonna of Syracuse, Sicily, 1963. $3.

• *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*. McHugh & Callan. HB. $10.

Etc., etc., etc. . . . but you get the idea.

Dirty Money Dept.

Postscripts to the Vietnam involvement pile up evidence of the callousness of Uncle Sam at war. Latest detail to come to light: the counterfeiting of North Vietnamese currency by the U.S. Information Agency at a Defense Department printing plant in Okinawa, and its dumping over North Vietnam by U.S. military aircraft.

From 1965 through October, 1972, some 60,000,000 phony bills were printed at the plant and sky-dropped. But, say U.S. officials, no deception was intended, nor was there any thought of disrupting the North Vietnamese economy. The U.S. merely wanted the North Vietnamese to appreciate that the war was causing inflation and the longer it lasted the weaker became their currency.

Now, that's what you call real solicitude. Believe it and they'll tell those weren't bombs over Bach Mai; they were marshmallows.

Odds and Ends

—That *New Republic* reference to Father Leonard Keeney, speared here 3/30/73. . . . It was a typo, reports Doris Grumbach, *NR* contributing editor. Her reasoning is impeccable: "No one who grew up in that age could ever mistake Feeney for Keeney." Besides, she has her carbon.

—Another distress signal from another journal of opinion: *The Nation*'s new mail piece complains of "higher printing costs and excessive postage rates," and offers subscribers a bonus book for new subscriptions steered *The Nation*'s way. "We'd hate to toss in the sponge after almost 108 years of continuous publication," says *The Nation*, "but since there's a limit to how much we will charge our loyal subscribers, we must look for other ways of keeping alive." JOHN DEEDY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Nixon Iconoclastes

Delaware, Ohio

To the Editors: Mr. Miller made some good criticisms of my book *The New Iconoclasm* in his review of Mar. 16th, 73. I was astonished, however, to read that in the last election "a landslide majority of Americans voted no on the central metaphor" of the book. And, a little later: "The heartland of American mind is opting not for the experimental future, but for the familiar historical patterns of thought, behavior and authority." On this reading McGovern was the iconoclast and Nixon the traditionalist.

I don't buy that for a moment. It must be remembered that McGovern campaigned on the theme of "Come Home, America," making a genuine appeal to some of the binding values of the past. Thus he wanted to put brakes on the industrial military complex, to temper our materialism with some old pieties, to carry us back a little in spirit. Nixon on the other hand is foursquare behind the corporate-technological order. Such an order is fundamentally hostile to the values of the past because they inhibit growth and progress. As J. H. Plumb noted in his *The Death of the Past*, industrial society "does not need the past. Its intellectual and emotional orientation is toward change rather than conservation, toward exploitation and consumption. The new methods, processes, new forms of living of scientific and industrial society have no sanction in the past and no roots in it. The past becomes, therefore, a matter of curiosity, of nostalgia, a sentimentality."

Nixon, to be sure, made and makes effective sentimental appeal to the good old days. But there is a mighty difference between using the past for present political purposes and valuing it. I fear that in voting for Nixon Americans weren't opting for any covered-wagon morality; they were opting for greater consumerism and relief from thinking

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VIETNAM 'DISENGAGEMENT'

Given the emphases of "peace with honor" and the "triumph" of the POWs' return, one would have expected the day of official American "disengagement" from Vietnam to have been an up-beat occasion—one of relief and of thanksgiving that there was a satisfactory end after all to a seemingly endless military involvement. Instead, the day that saw the last of U.S. ground troops depart on the release of the last POW by Hanoi was diminished by Presidential dispensing of threat to the North Vietnamese, an offensive restating of opposition to amnesty, and an orchestrating of press conferences nationwide featuring ex-POWs with tales of torture to tell.

The low notes suited in a way the tone of the nation's involvement in Vietnam. Still, the sounds were jarring, for they lent substance to the possibilities that Mr. Nixon is likely to spring Navy and Air Force again into action in Vietnam; that he is prepared to keep stirred the embers of the domestic divisiveness by hard-lining on amnesty; and that he is willing to jeopardize his own $7.5 billion reconstruction-aid proposal to South and North Vietnam in order to score some debatable points on the torture topic. By opening up that issue, Mr. Nixon injects an emotional element into a matter already beset with difficulties and deflects debate away from the real question—which is not whether the North Vietnamese were humane and just captors (the South Vietnamese certainly were not), but what the U.S. owes in political and human justice to the Vietnamese people. Reconstruction aid is due North Vietnam, whatever the degree to which torture may have been applied.

But nothing of "disengagement-day" developments is more fraught with worrisome consequences than the President's veiled threat to unloose planes and fleet if the leaders of North Vietnam do not comply with Administration understanding of the Paris agreements. Apart from the very real question of Constitutional authority to continue to wage war on Presidential whim, there is the danger of reinvolvement, for the course threatened will inevitably lead to more killing, to more casualties, to more prisoners of war. In a word, it will set again in motion the cycle from which it took the country years to extradite itself.

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If disengagement means what it is supposed to mean, there should be no thought of revving up bombers and taking other military actions in a war of intimidation and reprisal. The new situation in Vietnam demands a new realism in Washington, including realization that the U.S. can no longer act there with armed reflex, and that remedial measures to truce violations must be sought in consultation with "the other parties."

Country and world would be far more comfortable with a Nixon Administration policy that worked towards the strengthening of an international mechanism to insure the terms of the cease-fire, and that at the same time gave some more reassuring understanding of the meaning of disengagement than bombing raids over Cambodia. It would also help if Mr. Nixon stopped carping about "small but vocal" minorities, and displayed a bit of the magnanimity without which divisions at home will never be healed.

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ELECTIONS IN CHILE

WILL THE REAL WINNER PLEASE STAND?

"President Salvador Allende promised that the Chilean way to socialism would have the flavor of empanadas (meat pies) and red wine—but now there is no meat or red wine."

—Anti-Government refrain

"This Government is shit, but it's *our* Government!"

—Refrain of many Government supporters

The elections to Parliament which took place in Chile on March 4 resulted in both bands, pro and con, claiming a victory—a typical local reaction. Both those supporting the socialist *Unidad Popular* (UP) Government, which came into power November 4, 1970, and those damning President Allende and all his works were caught off balance by the results. Thus, in the early hours of March 5, with only 40 percent of the total officially reported, the right wing *Partido Nacional* (PN)), the left-center Christian Democrats (PDC), and Socialist-Communist UP all took to the streets to celebrate.

The argument as to "who won" revolves around the question as to whether the election was, or was not, a plebiscite. Ex-President Eduardo Frei (PDC) spoke for the Opposition when he contended that 50 percent + 1 voting against would indicate that government performances of the past two years had been repudiated by a majority. In addition, the Opposition underscored that in the last nationwide electoral contest, that for municipal offices held in April, 1971, when the UP received 50.4 percent, the latter considered the vote a mandate to carry out its program. The UP responded that many in the Opposition had hoped to win two-thirds of the vote, thereby being able legally to impeach the President. However, the results seemed to reverse a trend of declining UP support in both by-elections and in trade unions and professional associations. Most important, given the appalling (and that is the only word) economic difficulties the average *chileno* and country as a whole are facing, Allende—before the election—said he felt a 32 percent vote for his administration would be par for the course, "40 percent good and anything over 40 percent very good." He had, then, reason for feeling sanguine on March 5.

The final returns—and these are being retabulated and are not definitive yet—were not reported until 9 p.m. the following day. This unprecedented delay occasioned justifiable denunciations by the PDC and PN but fraud has not been charged. As of March 5 the united Opposition *(Confederación Democrática*—Code) had received 56 percent of the popular vote and the UP 43 percent. There were half of the seats for the 50-member Senate and all of the 150-member Chamber of Deputies to be filled. The new balance gives the Opposition 30 Senators and 87 Deputies (with the likelihood of three more after the retabulation). The PDC led all other parties with 29 percent of the vote for Deputies (and 34 percent for Senators). The PN followed with 21 percent and the Socialists and Communists took third and fourth places with 18 percent and 16½ percent respectively. The mini-parties, including the three varieties of radicals, polled less than 13 percent.

Pre-election polling here is primitive, and when a respected university professor claimed that the UP would only receive 25 percent of the vote his guess was as good as anyone else's. The old Right led by ex-President Gonzalez Videla felt emboldened once again to declaim his McCarthyite denunciations of "Communism" to the two Radical Parties who are outside the government coalition. He was the one who outlawed the Communists in 1948 and caused Pablo Neruda to go into hiding. He, mercifully, had been silent for over 15 years but felt, in February, he was going to be vindicated on March 4. Most of the PN assumed the CODE would receive close to 66 percent. The PDC was more cautious but had reasons for optimism after winning a majority in the union elections at the huge Chuquicamata copper mines in the North. Frei, who obtained the highest vote (by far) of any Senator-elect, asserted in February that Allende and the UP were being ingenuous in talking about The People and how The People would defeat

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The Reactionaries when The People in their neighborhood councils, unions, and professional groups, kept giving majorities to the Opposition—especially the PDC. (Happily, the UP does not use a Hegelian-Marcusean "People" who "really" represent the "true" interests of the majority even though, as in the case of the Revolutionary Left, MIR, which constantly invokes "The People," it never receives more than 5 percent in any elections off university campuses.)

The UP stood on what it felt to be its accomplishments in changing, irreversibly, the Chilean economic structure. The power of the large landowner—those controlling over 80 hectares (about 195 acres) of land—is over forever. The major industries and all sources of credit are in the hands of the state as well as major wholesale distribution. (Unemployment is low, 3 percent to 4 percent in Santiago.) And, of course, the major mineral resource, copper, is completely in Chilean hands. Democracy, in the sense of free elections and basic civil liberties, continues to thrive. What, then, is the objection of the PDC, which was also for most of these changes, to the UP other than a seeming petulance at not being in on the act? Back in September, 1971 in the *New York Review of Books* the English socialist, E. J. Hobsbawm, indicated what might be some difficulties facing the Allende Administration. When he said that "leftism is an easy way out for people who find that they are no good at their new government jobs," that the UP is "organizationally unsuited to the tasks it has accepted," and that the government had "failed to mobilize the masses adequately in its support" he was, as one sees now, understating the case.

For the past six months Allende has been berating the government-appointed factory administrators as well as workers for everything from absenteeism to large-scale pilfering—but no one is fired and shortages acrue with unit costs of production so high that the losses sustained last year by the new state-controlled industries were equal to over 40 percent of the national budget (some 50 billion *escudos).* These gigantic overheads in everything from the nationalized fish industry to the port facilities (Valparaiso now has the dubious distinction of being the most expensive port in the world, as well as being the most inefficient) in addition to an increase of 260 percent in the emission of currency between January 1971 and December 1972 have led to Chile's having had the world record of 165 percent inflation last year. (Another yardstick: in August, 1970 the black market $ fetched 20 *escudos* whereas 28 months later it got 400+.) And yet, as Frei bitterly recalls, in one year when the UP produced a greater inflation than in all of his six years in office combined the Communist-dominated *Central Unica de Trabajadores* (AFL-CIO of Chile) which plagued him for extravagant pay rises, now calls for restraint. (One of the "40 Measures" of the UP platform in 1970 called for an automatic readjustment up of salaries when the cost of living went up 5 percent. This has since been forgotten—by the Government.)

The inflation was predicted by all. But the UP, in its "populist" phase in 1971, was anxious to satisfy the expectations of the masses. Its leaders had never really taken the phenomenon seriously and thought that the "basic structural changes" would right things by the end of 1972. Its 1970 program of "40 Measures" put the struggle against inflation at number 30 in its priorities (after such items as "summer vacations at the Presidential Palace in Viña del Mar for the best Prep. School students"!). Such relatively little redistribution of income as took place in 1971 was thus wiped out by price-rises the following year.

If production had increased significantly in 1972 and if the food supply had been less dependent on imports, the situation would be not quite so serious. But, according to University of Chile economists, agricultural production declined 5 percent last year and $450 millions worth of food had to be imported—three times the amount the Frei Administration had to import in 1970 after two years of drought. In spite of Allende's repeated promises, illegal *"tomas"* (take-overs) have continued hitting efficient farmers who are, under the law, entitled to keep their property. The grim fact is that over half of the newly reformed sector is producing *nothing* and that over half the national food produced comes from the vital (and insecure) "middle sector"—farmers owning 30 to 80 hectares.

The same confusions and anxieties apply to industry and commerce, especially in the matter of lack of legal definitions of property—the rules of the game. For well over a year the Three Areas of Property (private, social, mixed) proposal has been pending. A year ago Allende announced the government's intention of taking over only 91 industries; a year later close to 250 had been "intervened." It is this matter which caused the definitive break between the PDC and UP and led one radical group to leave the UP. It accounts for the almost total lack of new private investment and, added to sectarianism and lack of dialogue, helped produce the big strike of truckers last October.

One of the little noticed cases of the "middle-class" strike last year was just this atmosphere of insecurity for small business combined with pettiness and arrogance on the part of certain government functionaries—who were backed up when they should not have been. The tale was told by Senator Tomás Pablo (PDC) in a Senate debate two weeks after the truckers' strike began. A Socialist official in the southern town of Aisén proceeded, in his capacity as the local head of the Corporation for Development (with a salary 6 times that of a secondary school teacher), to set up a state transport enterprise. This was done in the face of determined local teamster opposition. The functionary,

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knowing that the state bank had not okayed their requests for loans to obtain spare parts and tires (because he, himself, had short-stopped them) claimed that new enterprise was needed because the existing transport was inadequate. (It was no coincidence that the same man was Socialist candidate for deputy March 4.) The truckers notified Senator Pablo who urgently called the Minister of Economy who passed him on to the Vice-President of the Corporation who was "too busy to be bothered" with such small beer even after Pablo said it might lead to a nationwide strike. This lack of ordering of priorities is rampant on all levels of administration. In this instance it led ultimately to the three branches of service being incorporated into the Cabinet with the Army Commander-in-Chief as Minister of Interior.

It was the armed forces entering the picture that avoided what would have certainly resulted in a confrontation and made possible the relatively peaceful setting on March 4. But the military presence has disgruntled the Socialist Left and MIR to which should be be added the MAPU (a left splinter from the PDC, 1969) and *its* splinter (Christian Left, 1971). The aggregate of the votes received for those splinters March 4 was less than 4 percent of the total but they are mostly university people and self-defined intellectuals and therefore taken very seriously indeed. Everyone else, up until now, has been happy with the arrangement, not least the Communists and Allende Socialists. The "left" MAPU (*they* split the day after the elections) leaked a document to the press four days before the election.

This MAPU analysis contended that the apolitical armed forces had tipped the balance in the UP coalition to favor what they refer to as the "Center," that is the Communists and Allende who now want to consolidate gains made instead of pushing forward. These same "Centrists" want to see a way out by some agreement with the PDC, according to these UP left intellectuals. This same left element was also perturbed by the implications of the statement of General Carlos Prats, Interior Minister, who allowed that as 75 percent of Chile is for change, confrontations were stupid and unnecessary. The report, finally, gave the Opposition a fine bit of agitprop on election eve, namely that the economic crisis will show its worst effects in April and May.

Allende himself said last October that the country did not have "one dollar" left. The report indicated that the President's trip abroad last November obtained for the country just enough hard currency to keep the ship afloat for a short while. Bolivia is now refusing to sell more meat to Chile until previous orders have been paid for and recently the UP has had to borrow $5 million from North Korea and $21 million from Rumania. This lack of hard currency is one reason Chile never completely burned its bridges with the U.S. and planned a series of talks beginning the end of March on debt renegotiation and other matters in Washington. This is urgent especially since the Soviet Union has been singularly reluctant to extend large-scale credits to the UP Government. This could help to account for the growing Communist Party "realism" of late.

What are the immediate political implications of the truly staggering economic situation and the left-right struggle within the UP? In a country with a citizenry less phlegmatic and good-natured than this, one could say without hesitation food riots and generalized chaos leading to some form of confrontation. The left with a voting base—Allende's own party, the Socialists—through its leader, Senator Carlos Altamirano, considers the latter inevitable. The MIR (most of whose leaders also carry Socialist Party cards) also think the "objective conditions" are ripe for a "popular revolutionary offensive." The local leaders of the (legally undefined) supply and price councils (JAP) are also anxious to take on the small retailers (all 120,000 of them) and institute a form of rationing at the *barrio* level. These same factions are furious at the Communist Minister of Economy, Orlando Millas, who prudently, and at last, is insisting on a Three Areas of Property definition and seems even willing to return some of the illegally seized industries to their owners in order to reach an accord with the PDC legislators. If on the left there is a feeling that a showdown is in the cards, the Center (taking that to mean in this context, the Armed Forces, Communists, Allende Socialists and the few Radicals left after March 4 as well as most of the PDC) seems to be groping for a peaceful way out of the social and economic impasse. The very fact that a week before the elections two PN journalists accused certain PDC leaders of carrying on secret conversations with the Communists (although this was hotly denied and the PN later apologized) appears to point to something along these lines. The conservatives in the CODE (the *electoral* opposition) are pleading for its continuation. But the PDC, with 30 percent of the popular vote, is clearly waiting to see what overtures, if any, it receives from the UP. Another not negligible factor making for a period of "consolidation" rather than "confrontation" is the Armed Forces' determination that Chile not fall into the same chaos of which Uruguay is an awful warning.

The Army can take care of the MIR but can Allende control the program-less blowhards in his own party and their hangers-on in the swollen government bureaucracy? The PDC has been left holding the bag more than a few times the last two years as it tried to reach agreements on legislation with the more reasonable of the UP leaders. Allende will have to make the decision soon before he loses his few remaining options and the "People" on his left force his hand.

DONALD D. RANSTEAD

(Donald D. Ranstead, a previous contributor, is an American writing and teaching in Chile.)

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ONE VOTE FOR THE HANGMAN

PETER STEINFELS

DURING MOST of my life I have been opposed to capital punishment, but the more I think about it, the better idea it seems.

One of the obstacles to viewing the question of capital punishment as clearly as the President does, is the common notion, derived from vulgar utilitarianism, that the purpose of punishment is to deter crime. That capital punishment does in fact deter crime is, unfortunately, a proposition no one has been able to demonstrate. Nor can most of us say that we have felt noticeably less safe in the streets during the nine months since the Supreme Court ruled executions unconstitutional.

It is true that whenever the efficacy of some procedure is questioned, one can always fall back on Chesterton's remarks about Christianity: that it has not failed, but simply has never been tried. This is just about what Mr. Nixon has done in the case of capital punishment.

By doing so the President may have merely muddied up his own best argument, because deterrence is not the only purpose for punishment, at least not in any narrow sense of deterrence. Would we let Lieutenant Calley go scot free if we only knew for sure that neither he nor any other American soldiers would ever again be in a situation where they might be tempted to repeat the massacre of Mylai? Probably not. We prosecute crimes committed in circumstances so historically unusual that deterring either that particular criminal or that particular crime can hardly be our intent. We feel that there is a justified retribution for things past regardless of the possibilities of the future. We feel the need to affirm certain social values, or even to affirm justice in general. Naturally we believe that such an affirmation will ultimately redound to our benefit; perhaps this is a form of deterrence after all, but not in the narrow sense measured by crime statistics.

Thus when the President says we should treat the criminal "without pity," I believe that it is not so much the criminal he is aiming at, but pity. This Administration believes that there is altogether too much pity floating around. And not just in matters of crime, either. Pity for the poor, for minorities, for the aged, for victims —or rather so-called victims—generally. Pity is sticky, it gums up the machinery of government. We can no longer afford it.

So the President has decided to reaffirm the value of ruthlessness, thus counteracting the dangerous spread of pity. Reinstating capital punishment is one good way to go about it. It is gall in the wounds (appropriately enough) of the pity-mongers. The President, as usual, is a consummate reader of the American heart, wherein ruthlessness is deeply inscribed; indeed if he had the rhetorical inclinations of a Senator McGovern, he might proclaim, "Come home, America! . . . Come home to the ruthlessness of your forefathers, to the ruthlessness which cleared the land of savages, which seized the fruits of nature, which harnessed the immigrant to the machine, etc., etc."

It would be a mistake to imagine that the Administration has not thought this matter through. Ruthlessness is an antidote to pity; and pity (or compassion, as the liberals like to say) was the fuel of the "new permissiveness"; and the "new permissiveness," which was loosed on the country late on the night of Nov. 8, 1960 when John F. Kennedy defeated Richard Nixon for the Presidency, has been corroding the values at the heart of the Republic. So capital punishment plays an important part in an overall strategy to save the nation.

As I said, I find this all very convincing. Certainly, every time I read the papers it does seem like something is being corroded in the country. There are values which need to be upheld, especially those at the center of our political trust, and they should be reaffirmed, even ruthlessly.

It is puzzling, of course, in view of this serious state of affairs, that the President's list of candidates for capital punishment is limited to such types as assassins, skyjackers, traitors, spies, and saboteurs—dangerous people, to be sure, but so often hapless and isolated individuals, who can hardly be responsible for the recent wave of "permissiveness." No, as the President has suggested on other occasions, we should look to the comfortable elites for the source of the problem. Perhaps in the rush of preparing legislation, the White House staff did not complete their task. Let me assist, then, by adding a few more categories of people who are criminally undermining our Republic, and for whom executions should be legalized:

- Anyone committing atrocities while in the armed forces, and anyone who hinders the investigation of such atrocities.
- Any public official exceeding his constitutional authority in matters of waging war.
- Any person contributing $200,000 or more to a political campaign with the intention of prejudicing a legal case or purchasing special favors; any person accepting such a contribution with knowledge of its intent, or cooperating with the contributor's efforts.
- Any public official cooperating in the use of the nation's espionage apparatus or the Federal Bureau of Investigation for purposes of domestic partisan politics, and any person purposefully hindering the investigation of such use.
- Any public official conspiring to restrain freedom of the press.
- Any person offering monies to

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POST-CONCILIAR CATHOLICISM: SPAIN

THE CANDLE AND THE STICK

ALAIN WOODROW

From conventional Christianity to optional Christianity

"All Spaniards follow the Church," goes a well-known proverb, "half of them carrying a candle, the other half a stick." After more than a quarter of a century of its Holy Alliance with the State, however, the Spanish Church is beginning not only to refuse certain candles but also to make timid advances to those who are wielding the stick.

The marriage between the Church and the Franquist regime dates from July 1st, 1937, when the whole Spanish hierarchy (except for two bishops, one Catalan and the other Basque) addressed a collective letter to the bishops of the world explaining that the war waged by General Franco's National Movement was an "armed plebiscite," a "crusade" against the wicked. After his victory Franco made the Church one of the pillars of his regime, including the following article in the Spanish "Fundamental Law" (or Constitution), drawn up in 1945: "The profession and practice of the Catholic religion—which is that of the Spanish State—enjoy official protection."

In 1953, Franco signed a concordat with the Vatican which granted him the right to nominate residential bishops (from a list of three candidates selected by the Pope from a previous list of six names, drawn up jointly by the papal nuncio and the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs). This privilege was negotiated in exchange for such advantages to the Church as a State-paid clergy, exempt from military service and immune from arrest, except with the consent of their bishops; compulsory religious education in all schools and universities; religious marriage as the only form recognized and the prohibition of divorce. In annexing this powerful ally, it really seemed as though Franco's troubles were over.

But he had not reckoned with the Council. Not only was Vatican II followed with interest and approval in Spain—by the priests and faithful much more than the bishops—but, since the Council, Paul VI has consistently encouraged reform. Faced with Franco's continuing refusal to renounce his privilege of choosing bishops, in spite of repeated requests to do so by the Pope himself, Rome adopted the solution of refraining from replacing the titulars of vacant sees and nominating auxiliaries instead. In this way, Franco has been an unwitting instrument of reform, since the large numbers of young auxiliary bishops of a "post-Vatican II" stamp, chosen by Rome often against the wishes of the Spanish government, were not only given full voting status within the episcopal conference but, to add insult to injury, it was decided, in December 1971, to refuse the vote to bishops over the retiring age of 75.

This change in the balance of forces has hastened the pace of reform and strengthened the position of the "conciliar" bishops, now in the majority. But the struggle is a slow and arduous one, with the conservative minority fighting a desperate rearguard action, fully—albeit secretly—supported by the regime. The most recent plenary assemblies of the bishops have each marked an important stage in the progress of the conciliar clan, who have learnt that there is strength in numbers, but have also shown the determination of the conservatives, and of the Franquist authorities, to return to the pre-conciliar situation.

The 15th episcopal assembly approved the conclusions of the epoch-making assembly of priests and

ALAIN WOODROW, Commonweal's *French correspondent, is on the staff of the bi-weekly* Informations Catholiques Internationales.

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bishops, which had advocated, at the end of 1971, that the Church become entirely separated from the State and be unequivocal in denouncing injustice. Shortly afterwards, the Pope announced seven episcopal nominations to important residential sees. With one exception—namely the transfer of the conservative archbishop of Barcelona, Gonzalez Martin, to the primatial see of Toledo—the Vatican succeeded in imposing its conciliar policy. Most important of all, Cardinal Enrique y Tarancon, leader of the conciliar faction, was transferred from Toledo (whose prestige is mainly honorific) to the larger and much more influential archdiocese of Madrid, capital of Spain, in spite of the government's opposition.

The 16th episcopal assembly, held in March 1972, was even more important since one of the main items on its agenda was the election to key posts within the conference. This explains the desperate attempt made by the conservative minority to discredit the new liberal faction once and for all. Cardinal Tarancon was re-elected president of the episcopal conference by 52 votes to 20. At the very outset of the meeting he recounted in detail the last-ditch move by the conservatives to regain power. It was a gamble which nearly came off.

Explaining that it was his grave duty to make known the facts, since he had been "severely calumniated by his brother bishops," the Cardinal admitted that it was by a chance phone call from a journalist that he first learnt of the existence of a document emanating from the Holy See warning the Spanish hierarchy against the conclusions of the assembly of priests and bishops. "First of all I thought it was a joke in bad taste," added the Cardinal wryly, "since it seemed incredible that a press agency could have seen a text of such importance before myself."

The document turned out to be all too real, however, and what is more it was sent to the press and to certain chosen bishops before it finally reached Cardinal Tarancon, via another bishop! The document, subsequently published in full by a pro-governmental newspaper, criticized the resolutions voted by the priest-bishop assembly, stating that they contain "ideas which are clearly false" and lead to confusion on "essential points of faith, morality and discipline."[1] Although it was signed by several high-ranking prelates of the Roman Congregation for the Clergy—apparently with the tacit approval of its prefect, Cardinal Wright—several leading Spanish theologians immediately published a statement proving that the tone and content of the document are strangely similar to articles published in the Spanish press by the conservatives—who were probably the real authors of the document (it is well-known that several Spanish priests, belonging to *Opus Dei*, are on the staff of the Roman congregation).

As soon as he received a copy of the document, Cardinal Tarancon loyally offered his resignation to the Pope. He went to Rome some days later for a meeting of the permanent secretariat of the synod, and was immediately received by Cardinal Villot, Secretary of State, and then by the Pope himself. Both assured him of their fullest confidence in him and the Spanish hierarchy; Cardinal Villot gave him a letter in which he "deplored the truly lamentable confusion caused by a document of the Congregation of the Clergy" which had not been submitted to him and had certainly not received approbation from "a higher authority." For his part, Paul VI spoke of his admiration for the "constant loyalty of the Spanish hierarchy," adding that "for all its faults and weaknesses, the assembly of bishops and priests has had the most important psychological results."

Victory of the Conciliars

Once again, this attack merely led to a closing of the ranks by the majority. At the plenary assembly, thirteen "conciliar bishops," out of nineteen, were elected to the permanent commission of the Spanish hierarchy, and Msgr. Elias Yanes—considered to be one of the most progressive bishops—was elected secretary by 41 votes to 35. The pro-governmental bishops, who had filled 12 posts in the preceding permanent commission, saw their number dwindle to two in the present one. To counteract this, the government has recently offered a weekly television spot to Bishop Gonzalez.

General Franco himself entered into the fray at the end of 1971, when he made a speech in which he stated bluntly: "The State will not sit back with its arms folded in the face of certain temporal attitudes adopted by a few Churchmen." In spite of this warning, the Church refuses to remain silent. Shortly after this speech, the magazine *Ecclesia*, the official organ of Catholic Action, known for its caution up until now, stated in an editorial that "the Church cannot renounce its prophetic ministry of teaching social doctrine and denouncing the violation of justice." And last year, a document drawn up by the hierarchy's Justice and Peace commission for the Pope's "World Peace Day," which simply developed Paul VI's theme that to bring about peace it is necessary to work for justice, was banned by the government under the pretext that it represented a "conspiracy against the State."

Since then, the attacks by the regime, carried out strategically through the conservative minority, have redoubled in vigor. After the plan to discredit Cardinal Tarancon had misfired, two other controversial events took place. First of all the new Spanish Primate, Bishop Gonzalez Martin, took his place, with great pomp and ostentation, in the "Council of State"—thus showing his opposition to the resolution passed by the priest-bishop assembly condemning the bishops' official participation in governmental bodies; and then a national

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Eucharistic Congress was organized in Valencia, as a public demonstration of the strength of traditional Catholicism in Spain. This lavish Congress was financed by political organizations, and when the clergy of Valencia decided to ignore it, the local mayors and General Franco, who was present in person, transformed the proceedings into a political rally.

But undeterred, the Vatican is pursuing its policy of defending the forces of renewal. The latest example is its disavowal of the "International Week," organized last September by the traditionalist movement, "The Spanish Sacerdotal Fraternity" in Saragossa. The conservatives planned this meeting as a reply to the priest-bishop assembly, and in the handouts distributed before the meeting they announced the participation of numerous well-known conservative figures, such as Cardinals Wright, Rossi and Daniélou, Bishops Graber (German), Pintonello (Italian), Lefebvre (French) and Guerra Campos (Spanish). They also announced a special papal blessing. The title of Cardinal Rossi's speech was announced and it was stated that Cardinal Wright had written to the Archbishop of Saragossa, asking to be sent an official invitation.

Everything was ready, or so it seemed, for this "tribunal" of international reactionary forces to condemn the policy of renewal adopted by the Spanish hierarchy. Then Rome intervened. First, the Secretary of State sent a letter to the Spanish bishops announcing that the "Sacerdotal Fraternity" by no means enjoyed Rome's approbation, that the Pope had no intention of sending his blessing and that no representative of the Curia would attend the meeting. The letter ended by asking those Spanish bishops who had intended to go to the meeting to reconsider their decision. This was followed by a statement from the Congregation for the Clergy (headed by Cardinal Wright) to say that the Congregation had never officially approved the forthcoming assembly, but had simply thanked the Fraternity for its expression of loyalty to the Pope.

Although neither of these documents was made public, the Spanish hierarchy and the Holy See published simultaneous declarations disavowing the Saragossa meeting. The outcome was that instead of the 3,500 participants announced, only 1,000 priests attended the meeting, and not a single bishop showed up. The mood of the assembly was one of sadness and bitterness, and the president of the Fraternity declared that, just as during the war a lieutenant or simple soldier is bound to replace his commanding officer if the latter shows cowardice, "so it is with us priests: if the head of the Church no longer represents Christ, then he ceases to have any authority over us."

But the most recent plenary assembly of the bishops, held in Madrid last November 27 to December 2, shows that despite their preponderance, the conciliar bishops wish to avoid an open split with the conservatives. The problem seems insoluble as the conservative minority (approximately 30 bishops, as opposed to 50 conciliar ones) appears unwilling to make the slightest compromise. The assembly had hoped to publish a document on "The Church and the Political Community"—something along the lines of the recent document of the French bishops, "A Christian Approach to Politics," whose clarity and forthright tone had impressed the Spanish bishops, as well as the fact that it was passed unanimously.

It was impossible for such a text to find favor with all the Spanish bishops, but the dilemma was the following: should the force and clarity of the priest-bishop assembly's conclusions on the separation of Church and State be sacrificed in favor of unanimity? A compromise was finally reached, but the conservatives did nothing to help matters. Bishop Guerra Campos made a point of attending the meetings of the *Cortes*, instead of the bishops' assembly, while the other conservative bishops took refuge in a stony silence.

Three young auxiliary bishops had drawn up a courageous report, based on the conclusions of the priest-bishop assembly, calling for a much greater independence between Church and State. This document was then rewritten, and much watered down, by a commission of seven bishops. Although this version was adopted by 59 votes to 14, its modification was violently criticized by a number of young bishops, and it was finally decided to suspend publication until it had been modified once more. The bishops were asked to send their amendments, in writing, during the ten days that followed the assembly. After a final vote, by correspondence, the text will be published—if it receives a majority vote—before the end of the year.

In the face of the conservative faction's apparent capitulation, or inability at least to halt the movement of reform, the regime has been forced to show its hand in a last-ditch attempt to stop the Church from declaring its independence. Vice-Admiral Carrero Blanco, the man chosen by Franco to head the government after his death (Franco has just turned 80, and as one political commentator put it: "The Spanish problem is essentially biological."), recently published a warning to the Church, denouncing those Churchmen who had "forgotten what the regime of Generalissimo Francisco Franco had done for Catholicism in Spain."

This refers, among other things, to the 95 million dollars or so spent by the government each year to finance the Church—a form of aid which the Church would find it hard to do without. And the recent decision to halt the payments made to 19 seminaries, on the grounds that they are no longer functioning as such, was a veiled threat as to what might happen, on a larger scale, if the Church steps out of line.

It should not be imagined, however that Spain is peopled solely by Generals, Vice-Admirals and bishops.

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What of the ordinary people and their attitude to the Church? The vast majority have no opinion one way or another, for the simple reason that they are kept in ignorance of what is going on. The lack of information supplied by the mass media must be seen to be believed. The newspapers which publish facts, such as *Sabado Grafico* or *Triunfo*, are regularly censored whereas the governmental press, which has a very low circulation, is only read by the Franquist elite. More to the point, the average Spaniard, having finally joined the rat-race, in search of the affluent society, works an average of 12 to 14 hours a day (usually having at least two jobs), and he has little spare time for anything other than television, football and bull-fighting.

And it should be added that the more progressive elements of Spanish Catholicism consider the battle being waged by the conciliar bishops as already outdated. For them, the present evolution, while it represents an important step forward, could lead to neo-clericalism. As one leading layman put it: "In my opinion, the present conflict between Church and State is not a conflict between left and right, but between right and center. The bishops are once more in the limelight, and I am afraid that they are still too clerical and authoritarian to pursue their present fight to its logical conclusion and make the clean break with the regime we would like. Take the recent 'Justice and Peace' text, for example. The bishop who presided over this official commission, and who took part in the elaboration of the text, refused to sign it at the last moment. And when it was banned by the government not a single bishop protested."

An even more radical position is adopted by the students, for whom a complete separation of Church and State is in itself meaningless if attitudes do not change. Take the case of Portugal, they will say; there the Church and State are independent, but this does not mean that the Church is any more critical of the regime. What is needed is for the Gospel to be lived authentically; the mere "sacramentalization" that exists today is not enough.

In conclusion, one could say that present battle, which remains essentially clerical, represents an effort, on the part of the Church leaders, to catch up with the more advanced sector of Spanish Christians. And, paradoxically, the strength of the bishops lies in the existence of the very concordat that they oppose, since it guarantees them a certain freedom of expression and action, enabling them to demand rights that are taken for granted elsewhere.

In any case, a long and tortuous road lies ahead for the Church, if it is to retain its unity while remaining faithful both to the Gospel and to its mission in Spanish society. The greatest danger at present would seem to be not so much the threat of the reactionary forces—although their resistance and combativity should not be underestimated—as that of a neo-clerical triumphalism among the conciliar bishops, who do not seem to be fully aware of the dechristianization that threatens a traditionally Christian society, like Spain, perhaps more radically than a more secularized (and therefore better immunized) one. As the Spanish theologian, Jose-Maria Gonzalez Ruiz, has written: "We are in the process of moving from conventional Christianity to optional Christianity." In the present evolution of Spanish society, can the Church offer an option that is still relevant, or is it too late?

COMEDY CAPERS

THE SCREEN

Just as all jokes sound alike to someone without a sense of humor, *Slither* and *The Thief Who Came to Dinner* might seem alike in some fundamental ways. Both are films about white-collar crime, and both are specimens of a comedy-caper genre that has been gaining popularity of late. With James Caan and Ryan O'Neal as principals, each film also features that newly rediscovered phenomenon, the handsome leading man.

Slither chronicles the travels of Dick Kanipsia (Caan), a hapless, witless ex-convict and former high-school football great. (Caan began his rise to stardom as a demented jock, it might be recalled, in Francis Ford Coppola's *The Rain People.*) Dick falls in among some embezzlers, Barry and Mary Fenaka (Peter Boyle and Louise Lasser), who nearly get him killed trying to recover $312,000 they've stashed beyond the statute of limitations. Unfortunately they have stashed it with a stockbroker who is as dishonest as they and leads them a camper-trailer chase half the length of California. *The Thief Who Came to Dinner* is a computer engineer, Webster McGee (Ryan O'Neal), who blackmails a rich Texan into inviting him to parties and introducing him to all his friends. With the information he thereby gleans concerning the movements of high society, Webster develops a whole new career as a second-story man and jewel thief.

But fundamental similarities like genre, social interpretation, or casting philosophy aren't important. In movies it's the superficial that counts. What you see is what you. . . . And as anyone could tell just by looking at them, the difference between *Slither* and *The Thief Who Came to Dinner* is that the former is funny while the latter is not. *Slither* isn't just about white-collar crime alone. It's more a flirtation between grand larceny and armed felony, a liaison of a drifter and a swinger with the more stable criminal elements. On the one hand, Dick has a pill-popping, pick-me-up girl-

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friend named Kitty Kopetzky (Sally Kellerman) who pulls stick-ups when she runs short of cash. As Kitty herself admits, she's "just barely holding her brain together." On the other hand, Barry won't even drive fast enough to lose whoever is tailing him to the money because Mary, riding in the Airstream trailer he's towing, doesn't like to be bounced around too much. The Fenakas are so straight and staid that when Dick tells an off-color story, Barry glowers his disapproval while Mary fidgets in embarrassment.

Slither's director, Howard Zieff, comes to the movies from advertising, where he originated the Benson and Hedges and Alka-Seltzer campaigns. Doing that sort of work seems to have taught Zieff two things about the American consumer. First, you can't sell him romantic heroes anymore. Second, he would rather see life as a domestic comedy than an adventure. It's more reassuring. None of us can tell the good guys from the bad these days, or the criminals from the hardworking, decent citizens. In fact, between our complicity in Vietnam and our willingness to collect pay for jobs that no longer seem to benefit society, we've found ourselves wondering whether we're not all just crooks anyway. But if we must all feel like crooks, then we would at least like some reassurance that being a crook need not change our values or disrupt our life style too much.

That's the sort of reassurance the Fenakas give us in *Slither*. In order to recover his money, Barry might temporarily take to the open road where a man like Dick can be found. For awhile Barry will pack his life, and his wife, into his trailer the way Kitty packs all her worldly goods in the back of her stolen station wagon. But ultimately Barry is a respectable member of the middle class, and a little embezzling can't shake that foundation.

In the final scene Barry and Dick learn that the broker put the whole $312,000 into a children's camp that went bankrupt. As soon as he hears this, Dick walks off down the highway and out of Barry's life. A drifter by nature, he instinctively goes back on the road when things don't work out. But in the middle of that same road, Barry's trailer has permanently come to rest, carless and smashed. Unlike Dick, Barry is delighted. He gets in his immobile home with Mary. A bankrupt camp means land, he points out to her: they can make a new fortune by developing the land for suburban home sites. Barry has always represented the American Dream, which remains intact, a great comfort to us all.

Unlike his namesake, the man who came to dinner, the thief who came to dinner isn't a very colorful character. You can tell just from the names, in fact, how bland and conventional *Thief* is compared to *Slither*. Like James Caan, Ryan O'Neal has a girlfriend accomplice, played by Jacqueline Bisset. But a Laura Keaton or Webster McGee obviously aren't as many laughs as Dick Kanipsia and Kitty Kopetzky. Nor does *Thief*'s director, Bud Yorkin, have Zieff's insight into his audience's psychic needs. Even *The Godfather* turned the life of crime into domestic comedy. But Yorkin thinks it's still crime itself we're interested in. Perhaps he had no choice: he tried making domestic comedy once before, with a film called *Come Blow Your Horn*, and blew a raspberry instead.

Where the operative crime in *Slither* was committed before the movie even begins, *Thief* begins just as Webster is about to turn to crime. Webster is inspired to do so by the Napoleonic thought that in a society where everyone is a thief, success is simply daring to steal a lot instead of a little. This motive may be sufficient to make Webster a good thief, but it is his undoing as a comic figure. It taints his actions with cynicism, which is an outlook on life that flattens comedy as thoroughly as an oil drop flattens the head on a glass of beer.

There is a certain cynicism built into this film anyway. In *Slither* there is a mystery because we don't know who is following Dick and Barry, trying to get the money, any more than they do. We are as innocent of the machinations of the plot as they are. But in *Thief*, because we also see things there from the principals' point of view, we know more than is healthy. Laura's and Webster's is the superior point of view, and their robberies are in effect a sneer at the society in which they live. We are supposed to be laughing with Webster, not at him, and his laughter is at least implicitly sardonic. But that's a kind of laughing that is always hollow and highly uncontagious. COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

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HAROLD WITT

CELLIST

An instrument of love
hugged between his knees—
heartstrings—if there were such—
at which his bowings tug
ohing a mellow tone—
the low voice going up—
now his eyes are closed,
his head moves to the sound
of ecstasy evoked
whenever he moves his hand—
how he sways as the box
of curves and strands of gut
seems to be bouncing sparks
illuminating us
until by skill of sympathy
the world is lighting up—
then he steps down and bows
as if it never was.

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an exchange of views

I—Reactions on Abortion

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Your editorial "The Abortion Decision" [Feb. 16] was the only comment I have read on the issue that placed it in its proper perspective. It is indeed a challenge to our sense of values. While strengthening the common bonds we share with all humanity, we must at the same time deeply respect the infinite worth and dignity of each person as an individual; and in *every* area of existence.

Thank you for your constant and clear call to responsibility, and for reminding us again what it means to be really "pro-life."

PHYLLIS L. COLLINS

Humble, Tex.

To the Editors: Congratulations on your very fine editorial on the abortion decision of the Supreme Court. I receive several Catholic publications and watched in vain for someone to take a position other than the Supreme Court and other than the hierarchy. At last your issue of [Feb. 16] arrived and I welcomed the wording and reasoning of your editorial comment.

You used the word, "process," in your statement twice. I think it is a key word in understanding a "middle" position for Catholics. As you pointed out, life is always in process. It is always moving from potentiality to actuality before and after birth. Potential life in the womb must be protected by law and yet in such a way as to respect the rights of the mother. A Court ruling which would have helped us weigh the rights of the potential person inside the womb against those of the potential person outside the womb would have been far more helpful than the sweeping declaration that the fetus is a non-person.

Your editorial also pointed out the danger of inconsistency on the part of a church that vigorously defends life in process in the womb and yet remains silent when life in process is being destroyed through an unjust war.

I write to simply thank you for shedding some light on this complex situation in a time of great transition.

(REV.) WILLIAM D. STEELE

Riverview, Mich.

To the Editors: There is so much bitter ambivalence in your "Abortion Decision" editorial [Feb. 16] that I find it difficult to determine what bothers you the most: 1. the decision of the court or 2. the reaction of the Bishops which you find "embarrassing." In Michigan we experienced a thoroughly responsible reaction by the Michigan Catholic Conference. . . . It certainly does not appear to fit your pained description of full-page dead fetus ads, etc. This statement may help to broaden your slim sampling of official church response.

'The Abortion Decision'

Further, John Deedy's perpetuation of the Gallup myth that a majority of Catholics in particular, and *a fortiori* people in general, believe abortion to be a private matter between a woman and her doctor was belied by the voters of Michigan who overwhelmingly defeated an abortion on demand bill in November by a bigger majority than Mr. Nixon's landslide victory. I think it time that we bury that myth. People who come to grips with the grim reality of abortion, are apt to have an amazingly humane and moral revulsion to it.

(REV.) WILLIAM J. MURPHY

Amherst, Mass.

To the Editors: Your good editorial, "The Abortion Decision" [Feb. 16, 1973], noted that we are in danger of becoming an "abortion culture." Indeed, with this infamous decision which strikes down legal protection of the child *in utero* during the first six months of pregnancy, the Supreme Court in effect hands the death penalty to the Unborn. A vast minority of the beautiful people waiting to be born will suffer a violent death through suction, curettage, saline injection, or hysterotomy. What are we to make of that single week of insane paradox in the life of this nation, January, 1973? Peace at long last is announced for the victims of Vietnam, while war on the American Unborn is declared "legal" by Seven Patriarchs of "justice." All we could do was to read the *Lamentations of Jeremiah*. What came to mind was the image from *Matthew* of a herd of mad pigs stampeding over a cliff to its doom. Vietnam all over again.

I disagree at one point with your editorial. You declare the "official" church response to the Supreme Court decision to have been "an embarrassment." I must say that this was one of the few times in the last ten years that I found myself silently rejoicing in the pronouncements that come from the tattered bride. From time to time in history, the hierarchy has shown that it too has its charisma. This is one of those moments.

I should also like to add to Father Drinan's list of "Good Results of the Decision" a note of faith, hope, and love. The Supreme Court decision may bring together those within the church and the nation who hitherto were divided by the Vietnam war. Many who accepted the authority of the State and identified the peace movement with moral imperialism will now understand the need for, and the meaning of, civil disobedience. Conversely, many in the anti-war community may apply their good principles and share their experience of suffering by joining the cause of a just peace for the Unborn. I

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wonder if the following seven suggestions for a commitment to the Inviolability of All Human Life might not be fitting responses to the unjust decision of Seven Justices?: 1) pray daily for the Unborn and for the mothers and fathers of the Unborn; 2) promise 100% financial support to any pregnant girl in need; 3) take into your home any pregnant girl wanting housing; 4) approve the pregnancy society condemns and celebrate the woman who creates a new life; 5) support a national referendum to amend the constitution to guarantee the right to life of the Unborn; 6) refuse a portion of your taxes which go to abortion-sponsoring agencies; 7) carry out acts of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience against doctors, hospitals and agencies that do abortions in your community.

LUCIEN MILLER
Community of the New Covenant

Houston, Tex.

To the Editors: Thank you for your editorial, "The Abortion Decision" [Feb. 16]. It gave words to the profound feelings that people like myself have against the Supreme Court's decision—but feelings that are not accurately articulated by the "right-to-life" groups. You placed our anxiety over abortion in the only proper context of our anxiety over other social and moral problems and challenged us —the Church—to be as pro-life in other areas as we are for the unborn.

(SISTER) MARY SCHULTZ, O.P.

Providence, R.I.

To the Editors: Your editorial, "The Abortion Decision," makes me sad [Feb. 16]. When I first read it, line by line, the rage mounted, heart, adrenalin, breath and all, joining in the charge. "How can intelligent men like them . . . ?" Then I realized I had felt this way many times before. I had read these lines over and over again in the past. Change a detail or two, substitute the present tense for a few pasts, and your essay could have been written ten years ago. In fact, it was.

My initial impulse had been to write a reply pointing out your "gratuitous assertions" and "simple errors." You would have reacted angrily, "How can an intelligent man like him . . .?" Then you would have recalled that you had read these lines and I had written them many times before. Nothing new.

With the Supreme Court decision, history moves on. But we two groups continue to stand shouting at each other moral accusations of irrefutable logic: we who believe there is a morally significant distinction to make between the life of a fetus and the life of a person, and you who do not. I can only conclude that you and we have not yet listened to each other. Or surely we would have learned something, modified our position, and come closer over the years. And if we have not, what reason is there to expect we will? It is sad.

JOHN GILES MILHAVEN
Dept. of Religious Studies
Brown University

Bloomsburg, Penna.

To the Editors: Oh, *Commonweal*! Reporting *public law* decisions on abortion, particularly 9 Feb. '73, *Commonweal*, supposedly a *lay* journal, stressed reactions of theologians, clerics and ecclesiastical employees.

Recently the Executive Committee of the National Association of the Laity (NAL) publicly "applauded" the Supreme Court for its decision emphasizing *privacy* in matters of abortion. National polls (Gallup, Aug. 72, Jan. '73) indicate upward to 56 percent of the Catholic laity would leave abortion decisions to "the woman and doctor only." (*Commonweal* first reported this 5 months after the first poll.)

For three years NAL has researched and debated abortion, abortion and civil law, its socio-economic, legal, philosophical, familial and feminist aspects. NAL has reached no consensus. But debate clearly showed lay dissatisfaction with the hierarchy, specifically with its rigid position, and insensitivity to the complexity of the moral issue; with its failure to communicate adequately with the laity *who live the problem*; with hierarchical publicity and lobbying in matters of civic affairs and public law; with hierarchical attempts thereby to perpetuate the myth about the "monolithic" Catholic community; with surprising hierarchical statements designed to inflame supporters of their party to violent reactions.

A truly lay journal would have a role to play in all this.

Publicly NAL has repeatedly criticized hierarchical statements about *civil* abortion law. The public at large is well aware of the clear political threats the "churchy" structure has made in this debate on public law. Repeatedly polls showed strong lay opposition to hierarchical intervention into matters of public policy and public law. More in-depth opinion research would, I suspect, show the public welcomes well-reasoned, wise and measured argument from any source to guide it in its decisions; but that rancorous, inflammatory and parochial statements become at best a bore, and at worst, become offensive and menacing.

A truly lay journal could not have remained oblivious in its pages of the very context in which this debate has been carried on.

Historically *Commonweal* has rightfully earned the high esteem of the literary and intellectual community in the U.S. It has a great potential role before it now. Establishment, "churchy" types and parties (lay, clerical or hierarchical) enjoy exclusive control of enough media mouthpieces—not to speak of colleges, seminaries, and other official organs, or the organs of their quasi-official and controlled agencies. Independent organs of expression are few; they can not devote themselves exclusively to reform ideas. Yet the rumbling crisis in the Church demands it find a new vision of itself in Western culture, a new ideology of the Ecclesia. *Commonweal* can play a singular role in finding and broadcasting conflicting views in this crisis.

Your 9 Feb. '73 issue didn't live up to that hope. It dealt with reaction to abortion, a sensitive issue within and without the church. Deedy's generally light-hearted page (how I look forward to those few words of humor each week) was weighed down with a dull,

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predictable "lay" theological reaction [News & Views, Daniel Callahan on Abortion]. The editorial (on abortion) lacked clarity and organization; even its terms wobbled. Accustomed to your usually high quality editorials I was disappointed—especially that the matter concerned a moral issue close to home. Drinan, so very *simpàtico*, must have found it awkward to write on this issue. All book reviews came from clerical circles. [*Out of six reviews in the Feb. 9 and Feb. 16 issues cited, five were by laymen, one by a priest.—Ed.*] No lay organization reaction was evidenced. Indeed reading *Commonweal* on this critical issue from the beginning of the debate one would never know that there were even Catholic lay societies formed to fight for abortion reform much like the Court's decision.

Indeed comparing *Commonweal's* debate on abortion from the start, with the research and debate within the national lay organization, I don't see how *Commonweal* served the lay readers in this matter, with the notable exception of Dr. Mary Daly's article, reader reactions and her response. That was *prima.* Let's have more of it. In sum there are obviously many sources of competent, well-reasoned material on sensitive issues *Commonweal* is not taping or rejecting.

Why this "churchy" tilt? It's the "churchy" that's tilting. And I doubt it's tilting toward the "new ethnic politics" or such pathetic diversions from the central, moral problem of racism in the U.S. Let's hear something about that vitality out there.

JOSEPH T. SKEHAN
Secretary, National Association of the Laity

Englewood, New Jersey

To the Editors: Your recent editorial on the Supreme Court decision on abortion was sensible and temperate, [Feb. 16], but it left me wondering if there might be a middle way between acquiescence in the present situation and agitation for a return to the restrictive laws of the past. Might an amendment to the Constitution be proposed which would so define personhood as to permit early abortions but forbid later ones? A biological criterion for such a definition exists in the fact that measurable electrical activity appears in the brain of the embryo at around the 8th week of development. Between the 8th and 12th week of development, both reflex and spontaneous movements of the embryo occur. Defining person in these biological terms would have useful implications for the rights of the dying as well as those of the unborn.

It seems to me that late abortions are a clear and present evil which we are required to protest in some way. Their routine performance cannot help but brutalize the medical profession and the society which permits them. Since the conservatives seem committed to the absolutist approach of the Right to Life movement, it would seem that the only hope is to somehow arouse the liberal conscience on this issue.

ANNE E. CUSACK

II—The Maurin Dimension

Bronx, N.Y.

To the Editors: Peter Maurin, cofounder with Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker movement, had more to offer than what John Cort called "romantic agrarianism" in his article "Dorothy Day at 75" [Feb. 23], namely, a profound critique of industrialism in America.

First, Maurin saw that with machines making massproduction possible, the workingman had become more distanced from the fruits of his labor. Peter constantly said that the workingman of his time lacked a philosophy of labor to guide him and to give meaning to his labor. Work became less personally accomplished; the workingman lost the sense of the dignity of work and the sense of his own dignity and significance as a co-creator. Peter's main contribution in this regard is, I think, the underlying insight that industrialism refused to foresee this problem and did little to rectify the alienation of the worker from his work. Even today, many express disgust and frustration with their work, and modern industry is just beginning to look for solutions to the problem.

'Dorothy Day At 75'

Secondly, because of massproduction, there is mass unemployment—fewer workers are needed, and nothing of any consequence is done for those who are not needed by industry. Once a worker is no longer employable, he becomes useless to society. In response to this tendency to ignore the unemployable, Maurin pointed out that there is never any unemployment on the land; even though industry might not be able to use the unemployed, Mother Nature still supplies on the land the means for them to take care of themselves and to maintain their self-respect. Maurin also pointed out that the land was an outlet whereby the city's overcrowding could be eased.

If we look at Peter Maurin's agrarianism in terms of how it attempted to fill in some of the gaps in America's impersonal and unplanning industrialism, I think we will find more of value in Maurin's "points" than Mr. Cort found.

ALEX AVITABILE, S.J.

Tivoli, N.Y.

To the Editors: John Cort in his review of Dr. Miller's book, *A Harsh and Dreadful Love* [Feb. 23] creates a caricature of Peter Maurin which bears no resemblance to the gentle saintly man I knew. I feel a strong obligation to correct one false impression that he gives of Peter. It is all I can do as it would take an entire issue of *Commonweal* to correct the other misrepresentations.

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Peter, it is true, was voluble and given the opportunity could talk for hours on history and social problems without boring an audience. But to say, as John Cort says, that Peter tried to dominate a conversation is not true.

Peter was also a man of deep silence. Many a long walk I took with him in which neither of us said a word. I, because I was too young and ignorant to know how to ask the right questions. Peter, because he waited patiently for me to make a point. But Peter never forced his thoughts upon me.

Mr. Cort, do you remember the time (or had you already left for the fields of Labor) when a visitor came to talk with Peter. We sent him into the back office where Peter had his study. A short while later the man returned and told us that evidently Peter was too busy at the moment to talk to him.

When Peter was asked about this apparent rudeness on his part he told us. "The man came into the office and sat down. I waited for him to say something but he didn't make a point. I did not wish to disturb him and so he left." Peter had waited for the visitor to speak first.

But had he asked Peter a question he would have been immersed in a flow of speech that would have held him spellbound. Peter talked because visitors came from all over the world to hear him. They wanted to hear Peter and would often shush some college lad who wanted to show off his knowledge. It was Peter they wanted to hear.

Peter's technique was to give the person with whom he was conducting a conversation the freedom to speak as long as he wished. It could be the postman, a salesman, a street cleaner —even a Harvard graduate. Peter would never interrupt while the person was speaking. Many a time I heard Peter shushing an audience or a person and begging them to permit the one who was speaking the opportunity to conclude his remarks.

It was only when the person had finished that Peter would begin to talk. Peter expected the courtesy of being allowed to talk at length and to make his points. Peter did not like to be interrupted by questions. "I am not a question box," he would say, "but a chatter box."

If John had turned to page 478 of the same issue of *Commonweal* he would have found an excellent short review of Dr. Miller's book by George G. Higgins. Msgr. Higgins says in a few words what John Cort failed to say in two pages.

STANLEY VISHNEWSKI
Associate Editor,
Catholic Worker

West Hamlin, W. Va.

To the Editors: After reading the ideas of Peter Maurin, I made a major change in the direction of my life. I bought a farm and started farming. I question the accuracy of the description of Peter's ideas as "romantic agrarianism." . . . The back-to-the-land movement proposed by Peter does not come with "built in escape hatches from man and the works of man." The only way that an agrarian based economy made sense to Peter was when it was founded in Christian community—a community which by its nature would be an encounter with man and his works.

Peter questioned industrialism, the questions he asked are valid and the answers he proposed are practical. The works of ("machines and organization" or whatever else) are not what enobles man. Conscience is what enobles—the freedom to choose to contribute to the good of the community. And it is to emphasize that freedom that we have established a farming community along the lines proposed by Peter. It is true that our farm is not a faultless model of the perfectly self-reliant, unexploitive society. But each of us tries to take an active part in all of the work and responsibility for the daily tasks is shared by all. Obviously such a community does not automatically eliminate injustice and inter-personal conflicts but it does reduce them to community level where we can effectively deal with them at a personal level.

Here in the mountains of West Virginia we have difficulty accepting John Cort's statement that "the sum total of kindness and justice" is greater today than in the Middle Ages [Feb. 23]. I would suggest that rather the impersonalism of technology has removed injustice from our awareness. The electricity produced from West Virginia coal may help people throughout the country gain "freedom from the tyranny of hunger and cold." But the demand for less expensive coal to produce the electricity brought massive unemployment to the automated coal mines in the '50s, giant strip mines in the '60s and perhaps will bring the depopulation of much of the Appalachian region in the '70s. Coal mining has brought some affluence to the mountains, but mountaineers were certainly freer before the coal barons took over.

But what upsets me most about the article is the rejection of Peter Maurin under the pretext that he has nothing meaningful to say—the picture of him as a teacher who fortunately did not have that much effect. The existence of our community and that of the many other Catholic Worker communities is a challenge to that. Peter has left a valuable indelible mark on the Catholic Worker movement and his ideas are better known and more widely accepted today than ever before.

CHUCK SMITH
Catholic Worker Farm

Reply

I am glad that somebody gave me a chance to confess that my review was unfair to Peter Maurin. It should have said more about his positive contributions, the first of which was that he got Dorothy Day started on feeding the hungry, sheltering the shelterless and editing the *Catholic Worker.*

He was a great popularizer and he popularized the ideas of some great men: Gill, Berdyaev, Dawson, Chesterton, Penty, Maritain and the greatest of them all, Jesus Christ. He also had some good ideas of his own, and some not so good, which I mentioned. He was a kind of troubadour of ideas and many people responded positively to his songs and ballads. He was not

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good at discussion, except in one-to-one conversation. In a group he inevitably gravitated to the declamation of set pieces, his "Easy Essays." At least this was the way he was when I lived and worked with him in the Thirties. But withal, a sweet man and, on balance, a good influence.

As my review reveals only too clearly, the more extreme forms of agrarianism infuriated me back in those days and still infuriate me today, although on reconsideration I think I exaggerated Peter's extremism somewhat. Much of the extremism came from his followers.

I have no quarrel with anyone who wants to go back to the land. It's a great place to go back to and if you have the muscle and the smarts, maybe you can make a living. What gets me down is people who not only want to go back but insist that everybody else go back and then start putting down all the sweat and blood and heartbreak that have gone into the fight to reform industrialism and reconcile the machine with the demands of human personality as if this were all a great waste of time.

This sweat and blood has been poured out by a lot of people ranging all the way from decent employers to radical union organizers (industrialism isn't just industrialists) and I don't like to see them put down, even by a sweet man like Peter Maurin.

This is a heavy subject resistant to quick analysis and it might interest readers to know that between the issues of October 1, 1948, and January 7, 1949, this magazine printed three columns on the subject by the writer, two opposing statements by a fellow editor, Philip Burnham, and 19 letters pro and con by the readers. Anybody who has access to a good library and is interested might look them up.

As to whether Peter's ideas are "better known and more widely accepted today than ever before," I seriously doubt it. It seems to me that very few people today, unlike the '30s and '40s, are bemused by agrarianism as a serious solution to what ails the world.

JOHN C. CORT

BOOKS

The holocaust: sharing in the ultimate act

Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe Under Nazi Occupation

ISAIAH TRUNK

Macmillan, $14.95

IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ

The key to so much Jewish history between the rise of Nazism (1933), and the establishment of the State of Israel (1948)—a remarkable short fifteen years, but a millennium in terms of emotional history—is the word *survival*. That word has been the curse and the cure, that which unites and divides the Jewish people. Survival seems noble when confined to functional explanations of what makes a people cohere over time. And yet, as Isaiah Trunk's book shows, survival is something less than noble when it means a choice between Jews rather than of Jews as an entity and a wholeness. A fearsome book this is; a careful, painfully meticulous exposition of how the Jewish councils of Eastern Europe shared in the ultimate act of self-immolation under the threat of immediate other-decimation by the Nazi armed forces and Gestapo.

In his staggering and still unsurpassed masterpiece on *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Raul Hilberg in his Postscript notes that "one of our difficult problems is to understand how the German bureaucracy started its work, how its very first moves were made." Isaiah Trunk's work can be viewed as one effort to comprehend the nature of the holocaust by examining how the Nazi bureaucratic ap-

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paratus enlisted the support of a portion of the Jewish community to do its bidding within ghetto walls. The actual decree of Adolph Hitler and Governor General Hans Frank concerning the establishment of Jewish Councils, was issued on October 12, 1939, and read in part as follows:

> In every community a representative body of the Jews is to be formed. In communities of over 10,000 inhabitants this representative body, the Jewish Council (*Judenrat*) is to consist of 24 Jews from the local population. The Jewish Council is to be elected by the Jews in the community. If a member of the Council leaves, a new member is to be elected at once. From among its members the Jewish Council will elect a chairman and his deputy . . . The Jewish Council is obliged to receive, through its chairman or his deputy, the orders of German official agencies. Its responsibility will be to see to it that the orders are carried out completely and accurately. The directives which the Council may issue in the execution of German orders must be obeyed by all Jews and Jewesses.

Given the focus of the book, it is necessary to constantly remind oneself that the *Judenrat* at no point behaved in an autonomous way; that behind its every major decision, strategy and tactic, was the Nazi war machine and the Hitler regime's commitment to make the destruction of all Jews a primary goal—even at the cost of possible military defeats.

To describe this work as a labor of love would be wild irony; but it is not a labor of hate either. Too much care, patience and even apologetic has gone into this work for it to be described as a product of animus. The key chapter is called "The Strategy and Tactics of the Councils." Here we see, hidden beneath a veil of tears, their "rescue strategy" in which the majority of Jews would be saved and the minority of Jews would be sacrificed. As the author notes: "it is hard to judge now how much of these sickly fantasies about historic missions was pathological *mania grandiosa*, encouraged by the German stratagem of granting deceptive 'authority' over large Jewish communities to individuals whom they kept firmly on a leash, or how much was simply rationalization of an urge for personal prestige and power dominating ghetto heads." Suffice to call this a labor of historical record, an effort to move beyond the mistaken assumption of total ghetto rebellion, and also beyond the shallow Israeli militants who consider the entire history of European Jewry as bathed in weakness, cowardice and treachery.

Mr. Trunk attempts to show that the *Judenrat* was of one piece with the *Kehila*, a Jewish communal organization which persisted throughout the Diaspora, predating the Nazis by hundreds of years. Indeed, he demonstrates a continuity of *leadership* between Jewish communal life before and during the Nazi period. Yet, for all the careful intellectual maneuvering between sentiment and sense on the fine line between Jewish cooperation and collaboration with the Nazis, the conclusion of the book is more than a disappointment, it is something of a failure. For the author's retreat to simple-minded organizational theory, to a *sociologie manquée* claim that the *Judenrat* were of a piece with the *Kehila*, and that a distinction has to be made between collaboration with the state in general and with an ideology in particular, is ingenuous. No state ever existed "in general." And the Nazi state was no ordinary event, or a simple continuum with the Weimar Republic. Apologetics won't do. The belated participation in the Jewish Enlightenment was a failure, because European liberalism collapsed in the face of fascism. A central tragedy of the Nazi epoch is that the Jewish converts to enlightenment retained their fervor long after the contents of European liberalism had been emptied into the bloodstreams of extremist movements overtly hostile to Jewish survival. What has still to be understood is that the survival ethic itself had been destroyed by the holocaust, and by Jewish collaborationist efforts. The rise of Israel along funda-

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mentalist lines, with a reestablishment of neo-orthodoxy, cannot be understood simply as a return to tradition or a consequence of Zionist predisposition to religious orthodoxy. If anything, Zionism shared the European values of Enlightenment; present battles with religious orthodoxy in Israel attest to this. Religious neo-orthodoxy emerged from the ashes of war and concentration camps because of the sickness represented by a survivalist ethic that had displaced ethnicity for ethics; that forgot the fundamentals of Judaism as an ethical and historical religion. The conversion of Judaism into a pragmatic code of clever secular concepts counted for little against the Wehrmacht, against the Gestapo, and against the gas chambers. All cleverness crumbled before the Nazis, and total destruction became the order of the day, every day.

How diabolically clever it was of the Nazis to capitalize on the almost innate Jewish responsivness to the theme of law, order and self-regulation. We are confronted with the supreme irony that the Jewish Councils carried more authority than any other Jewish body since the Middle Ages. This alone heavily weighs *against* the author's idea of continuity with the *Kehila*, which, after all, had little legal or political weight by contrast. That this bestowal of authority should have been extended by their executioners led the survivors to a total moral nihilism. But this positivist nihilism stemmed not just from the Nazi experience, but from the Enlightenment experience. This later was to cleave into the Socialist experience (in which Jews suppressed their names and their identities to the larger tasks of Bolshevism) and the Bourgeois experience (in which Jews suppressed their names and their identities to the larger tasks of capitalism).

What we had in the *Judenrat* was the Jew as a "national question," the Jew as a "cultural question," the Jew as an "economic question"—always a question, never a person. Everything but the Jew as Jew. The absence of this seemingly tautological dimension compromised the European Jew. The ferocious reminder of the prophet Isaiah to his people, when their pride and arrogance brought them close to disaster is apt: "For you forgot the God who delivered you, and did not remember the rock, your stronghold." The promise of redemption in Judaism is delivered only through struggle. That is the message of the prophets; and that is what the simple theory of group survival at any spiritual or material cost fails to heed.

If it seems somewhat out of character for a social scientist to deliver such a judgment, it is that even social science comes upon the limits of imagination in the matter of holocaust, survival and transcendence. Perhaps there are sociological lessons in this after all: Jewish policemen of Lodz, Vilna, and Warsaw were, after all, still policemen. They functioned as repressive mechanisms of *Leviathan*, not as members of God's Commonweal. One might ask those who argue the case for community control, for the dis-

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placement of white policemen with black policemen, for example, whether this is, after all, an entirely satisfactory victory, or one more degradation ritual. Is there not a sense in which Jews being clubbed by non-Jewish police made a more meaningful, if not a more appealing sight than Jews committing Jews to their deaths? Indeed, I have rarely felt the obscenity of Nazism more acutely than when looking at a picture of Jewish police officers; the only efficient sector of the ghetto! Perhaps, I now better understand black radicals and their own sense of shame towards black officers —agents of laws they do not make, victims of ideological egalitarianism without the substance of true economic and political equity.

As a work of social analysis, replete with the accoutrements of survey questionnaires of Council members and ghetto police, and tabular materials on the fiscal and demographic characteristics of ghetto life, the book succeeds admirably. As a work of history, it is less successful, not really putting into adequate perspective the indifference and ennui of Christian Europe to the plight of the Jews; an indifference that clearly must have enhanced the "pragmatist" insistence upon cooperation through the *Judenrat*. As a work of Jewish analysis, i.e., of the analysis of the Jewish character, the work is a tragic failure. This is illustrated in the introduction by one Jacob Robinson. Perhaps Mr. Trunk deserved better, but he got worse.

> The Warsaw Ghetto Revolt of April 1943 was the first direct armed confrontation of local forces with the Nazis. The revolts of the ghettos were attempts 'to save the Jewish honor.' In view of the high price paid in human lives it proved to be no alternative to 'rescue through work' however ineffective.

Apparently, the quality of death means nothing to Mr. Robinson, as this hideous equation of death in rebellion and death in acquiescence reveals.

The conclusions of both author and his surrogate are that when all factors are considered, Jewish participation or non-participation in the deportations had no substantial influence, one way or the other, on the final outcome of the holocaust. This sort of *ex post facto* reasoning is precisely what the author cautions against throughout the book, and yet, it is indulged in freely in the Introduction. Indeed, we are given a typical apologetic for the *Judenrat* in the claim that "it is only by accident of military history that a considerable portion of the Lodz Jews did not survive." The claim is made that if only the Red Army had continued its July 1944 advance into Lodz, the 68,000 remaining Jews might not have been "resettled" (read annihilated). But of course, resistance might have made the tasks of the Red Army simpler, might have encouraged the Nazis to abandon their plans for the depopulation of Lodz. In the world of might have beens, resistance and rebellion certainly deserve no less praise, and much less scorn than accommodation and acquiescence.

This sort of nonsense, explicit in the Introduction, implicit in the text, is apologetics, not scholarship. Indeed, Maimonides, whom the good Mr. Robinson is kind enough to cite, said it all—and not just from the "viewpoint of the traditional Jews (who constituted a minority in the Councils)," but from the viewpoint of Judaism: "If pagans should tell them (the Jews), 'Give us one of yours and we shall kill him, otherwise we shall kill all of you,' they all should be killed and not a single Jewish soul should be delivered." And who is to say that Maimonides was wrong, and the small portion of enlightened, secular bourgeois Jews serving Hitlerism were right? At least Jewish *souls* would survive, even if their bodies would not. Under the *Judenrat*, precious few bodies made it through the holocaust, and even fewer souls.

Brother Francis

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JOHN HOLLAND SMITH

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EDWARD GLYNN

John Bernadone, born in 1182, was a man who took so seriously the question that the gospels present Jesus of Nazareth putting to his first followers —"Who do you say that I am?"—and the answer that he himself personally gave to it in his life that succeeding generations of Christians and non-Christians alike have come to know and love him as St. Francis of Assisi. In fact it was but two short years after his death that he was canonized by Pope Gregory IX on July 16th, 1228.

Stories of the remarkable response his life gave to this question that is put to individual Christians of every generation have been told—and re-told with various layers of legendary accretions—down through the seven and a half centuries since Francis first inspired men and women to follow Christ more closely. Publication of these two books is an indication that interest in Francis abides to the present. Their contents reveal why he is par-

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ticularly attractive to so many today.

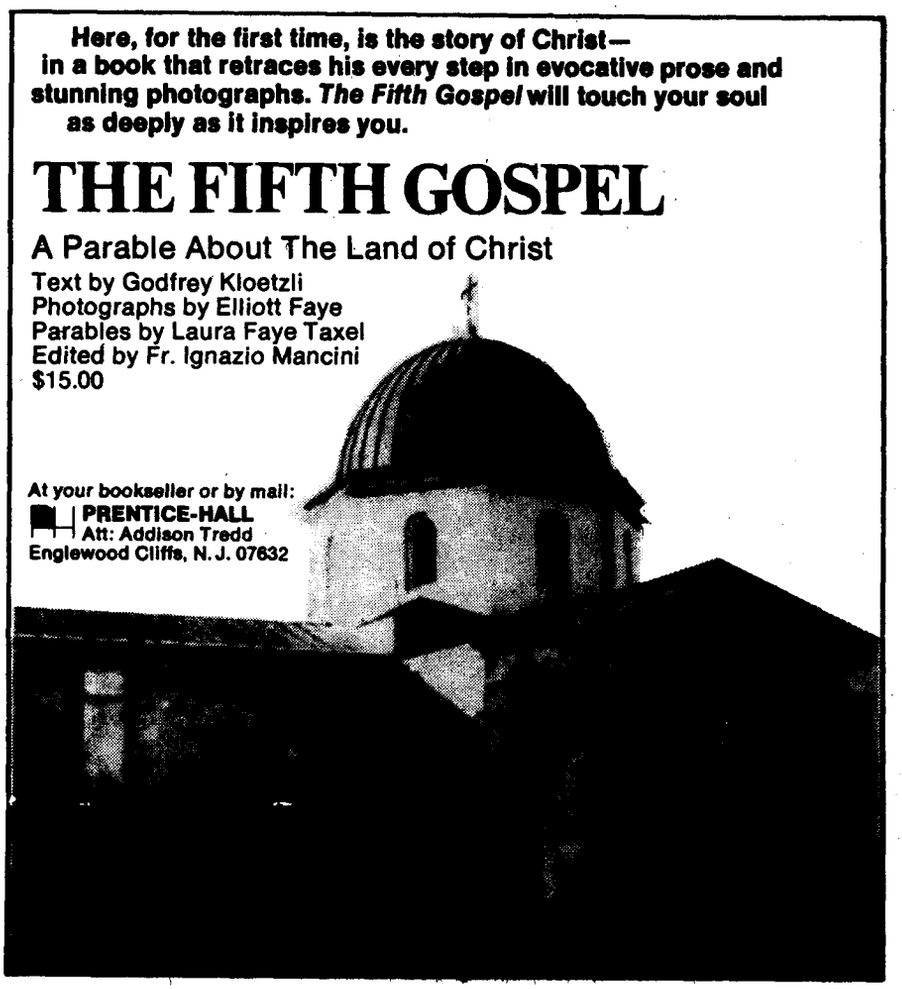
Brother Francis is an anthology of writings by and about the saint. The editor, Lawrence Cunningham, is a professor of religion at the Florida State University in Tallahassee. His selections about Francis make up by far most of the book. They range widely in their approach, e.g., "Saint Francis as Religious Revolutionary" from the controversial *Life of Saint Francis of Assisi* by the nineteenth century French biographer Paul Sabatier, "Francis of Assisi and Nature" from G. K. Chesterton's *Saint Francis of Assisi*, "Francis and Clare" from Nikos Kazantzakis' *Saint Francis of Assisi* and "Francis of Assisi: The Hippie Saint" by Joseph Roddy that *Look* magazine published in April 1971. There are also many excerpts from the *Fioretti*, the highly popular legendary and edifying accounts of episodes in the life of Francis that first appeared in book form around 1380. Included among the few pieces by Francis is his famous "Canticle of Brother Sun."

John Holland Smith, who in 1971 published *Constantine the Great* (Scribners), attempts in his new biography, *Francis of Assisi*, to sort out historical facts from the fictional and legendary accretions that grew onto the tradition about Francis as it was being transmitted down through the years. He points out the edifying transformations that occurred in the stories as the first biographers, writing during the fifty years subsequent to Francis' death, successively passed them on.

By effectively recreating the religious and cultural context in which Francis and his first followers began their wandering preaching—the early 13th century in what is presently Italy—Smith's own sober retelling of the story brings out the ambiguities that must have been present in Francis' actions when his life was not yet a finished story but—as in the case of every living person—an unfinished one. Its future, uncertain and unnecessary, is still to unfold out of a past and a present that is now necessary and certain. For example, when at the request of his angry father, under whose roof he refused to return, the twenty-five-year-old Francis appeared before Bishop Guy of Assisi to formally renounce all legal claims as the eldest son of the family, he startled his father and the bishop by suddenly stripping naked to make his point that he no longer possessed anything of his father's. From the perspective of that immediate moment Francis' action must have appeared much more ambiguous and his future more uncertain to both father and bishop than they do from the vantage point of a later time when they can be seen in the context of the whole of his life.

Some deficiencies in Smith's work are the dullness of his style, his occasional excessive psychologizing of Francis' religious experiences and his jarring but persistent calling of Francis' way of life, once it was canonically approved, a religion, e.g., "Once Francis accepted these girls [the eighteen-year-old Clare, her fourteen-year-old sister, their cousin and other young friends] as members of his religion. . ." (p. 91).

The value of both of these books is that they raise the profound question that the life of Francis raised for those who experienced him and the life of any authentically holy man or woman perennially raises. What are you living for? Power, prestige, wealth, education, academic excellence, poverty, chastity, obedience, one's husband, one's wife, one's self, the Pope, the President, the nation, the Church? What is the absolute in relation to which the importance of everything else in one's life is judged? In Cunningham's words, "Francis is, in the deepest biblical sense of the word, a *reproach* to those who would like to make Christianity over by restructuring either their own lives or their institutions in a peripheral or tangential manner."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American Mischief

ALAN LELCHUK

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $8.95

BRUCE COOK

Beware the novel that makes news. It is always for the wrong reasons. There may be revelations embarrassing to celebrities, or sinister gossip regarding the relations of nation with nation, party with party, or whatever with whatever. But always there is at least the suggestion of scandal, and seldom (if ever) the slightest assurance of quality. Good novels don't make news, they make history.

While all this may seem self-evident to you, it is knowledge that I myself have only recently come by. The hard way.

Like a good many others, I was intrigued by what I read a few months ago of Norman Mailer's rabid displeasure with a novel that was scheduled for publication by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, entitled *American Mischief*. It seemed Mailer himself was portrayed as a character in the novel, that he was in fact presented as the cringing murder victim of a young radical terrorist. Well, on the face of it, it looked like Mailer—who has explored those outer limits where fiction and reality meet—was being a bit of a spoilsport. (Was he so pompous? Couldn't he laugh at himself a little?) Alan Lelchuk, the young author of *American Mischief*, seemed to say as much when, according to the *New York Times* account of the affair, he burst out emotionally to Mailer: "Listen, you're the father of us all, you're the one who taught us to go as far as you can with literature."

Got him there, hasn't he?

Perhaps not, for having now read *American Mischief* myself, I can only hazard that in making himself troublesome to Alan Lelchuk and his publisher, Norman Mailer must have acted conscientiously in the cause of literature. Had he and his lawyer scared them into blocking publication altogether it might well have been better for all concerned. I am more than half serious in this, for I have been taken with the notion that if the book had only been a little better Mailer might never have complained. He has often managed to set aside that vaunted vanity of his in the interest of good writing: he has provided his detractors with all their best lines, after all, and lately has made himself the butt, rather than the hero, of most of his writing.

But enough of Mailer. What about Alan Lelchuk and his book? It is bad. And not merely that. It is breathtakingly bad, a kind of sustained adolescent power fantasy in which sexuality and violence are perceived and presented purely as modes of dominance.

It is a *sexual* power trip, of course, in its long first section, "Family Talk," which some—notably Philip Roth in a kind of testimonial he wrote for Lelchuk in *Esquire* some months back—have praised as impressively well written. It tells of the hyperactive sex life of one Bernard Kovell, the dean of Cardozo College (Lelchukese for Brandeis University), a man with six mistresses and the sort of obsessive satyriasis that makes both everything and nothing of sex. Most of the women to whom we are introduced remain mere shadows, fantasy figures without personality, reality, or individuation. Mere sex objects. This long early section (which, by the way, is slavishly imitative of *Portnoy's Complaint*) is so crude in its sexual chauvinism that it would probably convert William F. Buckley to the cause for Women's Liberation.

The remainder of the book—nearly 350 pages of it—is given over to the

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REVIEWERS

IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ is professor of sociology and political science at Rutgers, and editor-in-chief of *Society* Magazine.

FATHER EDWARD GLYNN, S.J., teaches in the theology department at Georgetown.

BRUCE COOK is on the staff of the *National Observer*.

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activities of Kovell's student at Cardozo, Lennie Pincus, who is also a kind of fantasy projection, a device by which the 34-year-old Lelchuk may participate vicariously in the violent radicalism that rocked Brandeis a couple of years back. (You remember the bank-robber revolutionaries, of course?) Pincus and his radical friends warm up to their appointed task with a sit-in at the Cardozo art museum which ends in a sudden orgy of destruction.

Then the murder of Mailer. This is Lennie solo flight: with it, he hopes to show that the new radicals mean business and that they have nothing but contempt for the old. Did Lelchuk change the murder scene? You bet he did. As it stands now, Mailer neither quakes nor quails, and there is also internal evidence that the text has been altered.

After that? They burn down Harvard's Widener Library, the Busch-Reisinger Museum, and a few other repositories of culture. But why *these*, for heaven's sake? Lennie muses:

> . . . . Make the intellectual bleed. Make him face life without his escapes and pleasures. Put him into the frame of mind of a peasant beneath napalm skies, a migrant worker, a garbage collector. Get the refined citizenry angry. Upset and insult him. Injure his pride. Then try to change him.

This, too, is the rationale for their final caper: the abduction of "leading intellectuals" to an isolated camp in New Hampshire where they are re-educated by the revolutionaries. All this is silly, pompous, and childishly unrealistic—Lelchuk obviously feels that pushing around "leading intellectuals" is pretty heady stuff—and, I suspect, cribbed from Ayn Rand, of all people.

In thinking about Alan Lelchuk and his novel, I keep returning to the burning of Widener Library. Although not much is made of it in the text, it seems the one truly symbolic act of the entire book. For *American Mischief* is in-and-of itself an act of literary destruction. Think about it. Lawrence and Joyce, and all the rest who suffered persecution and censorship to extend the boundaries of the novel—did they do all they did just to provide this third-rate first-novelist the opportunity to satisfy his enthusiasm for sexual-sadistic pornography and the more fashionable pornography of violence?

I hope not.

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Steinfels (cont.)

government officials for covert actions against foreign governments in order to secure the interests of private individuals and corporations.

It is true that few convictions might be obtained under these clauses. The crime statistics might remain unaffected. But as the President knows, the symbolic effect of instituting capital punishment for such offenses would be vast. The era of soft-headedness and half-measures is over. As soon as these categories of crimes are added to the President's list, I stand ready to back his measure. I am sure it is mere oversight which has kept them from being added up to now.

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 123)

about the complexities of our present experience or any relationship these might bear to history. Thus *realpolitik* confirms the iconoclastic themes that abound in philosophy, literature and the arts. The Presidency swells, the GNP augments and the past becomes increasingly the preserve of filmmakers.

Believe me, Mr. Miller, Washington is full of iconoclasts.

BERNARD C. MURCHLAND

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